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L E T T E R

TO THE

High Sheriff of the County of Lincoln.

A

LETTER

TO THE

High Sheriff of the County of Lincoln,

RESPECTING THE

B I L L S

OF

LORD GRENVILLE AND MR. PITTE, FOR ALTER-
ING THE CRIMINAL LAW OF ENGLAND,
RESPECTING TREASON AND SEDITION.

INCLUDING

A COPY OF THE AUTHOR'S PETITION TO THE HO-
NOURABLE HOUSE OF COMMONS, PRESENTED
BY MR. FOX, ON WEDNESDAY THE
25TH OF NOVEMBER, 1795.

BY JOHN CARTWRIGHT, Esq.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

1795.

A

L E T T E R
TO THE
HIGH SHERIFF
OF THE
COUNTY OF LINCOLN.

To AYSCOGHE BOUCHERETT, Esq.
HIGH SHERIFF, &c.

DEAR SIR,

Brothertoft Farm, Nov. 25, 1795.

HAVING been for ten days past confined, in the condition of a cripple, to the House, and seeing that it must be utterly out of my power to obey your summons for Saturday next,* I beg leave to communicate my sentiments in writing; and to request you will have the goodness to intercede with the Meeting, for allowing them to be read to the assembled county; as

* "To consider of an Address to our most Gracious Sovereign, relative to the late atrocious attack upon his Royal and Sacred Person."

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well

well as to assure the Meeting, that it is a cause of unspeakable regret to me that I cannot be present.

Of the object of the Meeting, simply as expressed in your Advertisement, I most cordially approve. But, sir, how is it possible at this singular and alarming crisis, to approach our Sovereign without going further than to offer him a mere congratulation personal to himself alone? The two very important Bills now pending in Parliament must be in every man's thoughts; and to every one, objects either of approbation or disapprobation.

As those Bills cannot become Law without the King's concurrence, so all who now address him, will naturally feel inclined to express to him their sentiments on those Bills, professedly brought forward in consequence of the late atrocious outrage on His Majesty's person.

+ * * * *

Provided any amendment, referring to the two Bills above mentioned can be admitted and worked into the proposed Address; I now offer

† Some matter of a local nature, is here omitted.

you

you a paper,‡ strictly relevant to the business of the day ; for almost its whole contents are a series of facts and arguments all tending, some remotely, others more immediately, to shew the true light in which those Bills ought to be seen ; containing also observations on the Bills themselves. I hope, sir, that paper may be read, and that gentlemen who may not at first sight perceive the connection, will yet have candour enough to suffer the reading to go on without interruption ; as I trust, the connection will at length be seen, and that the paper will explain its own meaning, to the satisfaction of every man sincerely wishing well to his Majesty and the Constitution.

Supposing then, my request to be granted, here will be the proper place for introducing the reading of the paper in question, as a part of the discourse which I have now the honour to be addressing, through you, Sir, to the Meeting ; as what is to follow the reading of that paper will have reference to the contents of the paper itself. I therefore here make a pause.

‡ A copy of the Author's Petition to the House of Commons, herein-after inserted in its proper place.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great-Britain in Parliament assembled; the Humble Petition of the undersigned, sheweth,

THAT your Petitioner in the strongest manner condemns and reprobates all such outrages on peace and order, and all such flagitious insults as appear to have been offered to His Majesty on the first day of the present Session of Parliament; and thinks the offenders ought, if possible, to be discovered; and, if discovered and convicted, to be punished in the most exemplary manner; and he presumes the laws now in being, fully adequate to that salutary end; as well as to the still more important one, of preventing, as far as law can prevent, the high crime of Treason; provided those laws be duly resorted to, and faithfully administered.

Holding these sentiments, your Petitioner has viewed with the deepest horror, the attempts now making in both Houses of Parliament, by certain persons in power, to introduce into the criminal law of England such a change as, in the opinion of your Petitioner, must, if successful,

cessful, remove from his mind every idea of his living under a free government.

Your Petitioner humbly conceives the proposed “*Bill, for the safety and preservation of his Majesty's Person and Government, against Treasonable and seditious Practices and Attempts;*” and another “*Bill for the more effectual preventing seditious Meetings and Assemblies,*”

to be wholly unnecessary to the laws of this country, injurious to the interests, subversive of the liberties, and dishonouring the character of the nation; and pernicious also in the highest degree, in as much as those Bills, if made law, would have, to the apprehension of your petitioner, a manifest tendency to foster and to aggravate the discontents of one part of the people; and, as soon as the prejudices of others shall by experience be done away, to beget in the community at large, a settled and rooted dislike of the government under which they should be doomed to live.

Your Petitioner certainly does believe, and indeed he knows, that great discontent at certain abuses and corruptions of the Constitution does exist amongst many of the people, whose anxious attachment to the Constitution has taught them

to study its principles, and to consider by what line of conduct, both on the part of the people, and of their rulers, that Constitution is to be preserved. That sort of discontent, your Petitioner is not ashamed to own, he himself has long and deeply felt, and largely shared; nor does he wish to conceal from your Honourable House, that the views he has taken of the abuses and corruptions he speaks of, have filled his mind with the most melancholy presages of the approaching loss of British Liberty: nor can he now entertain a better hope, unless certain measures, congenial with the true principles and obvious maxims of our Constitution, be speedily adopted by your Honourable House;—He need not say, they must be measures of a complexion as different from the dreadfull Bills now pending, as light from darkness.

Here your Petitioner most humbly intreats your Honourable House, to look into its own journals, for a Petition presented to it on the 6th day of May, 1793; and to review the same Petition, with that serious attention, that full deliberation, and that impartial regard to the most important right of Englishmen, which the subject matter of that Petition so well deserves to have bestowed upon it.

That

That Petition, as your present Petitioner is credibly informed and believes, states, amongst a great variety of particulars of high importance, the following facts and inferences, and in the following words, namely;

“ That at the present day, the House of Commons does not fully and fairly represent the People of England, which, consistently with what your Petitioners conceive to be the principles of the Constitution, they consider as a grievance, and therefore, with all becoming respect, lay their complaints before your Honourable House.”

Again:—“ Your Petitioners, in affirming that your Honourable House, is not an adequate Representation of the People of England, do but state a fact, which if the word ‘ Representation ’ be accepted in its fair and obvious sense, they are ready to prove, and which they think detrimental to their interest, and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.”

Again:—“ Your Petitioners must now beg leave to call the attention of your Honourable House, to the greatest evil produced by these defects in the Representation,” [Referring to a long enumeration of defects, besides those here

quoted.] " of which they complain, namely;
 " the extent of PRIVATE PARLIAMENTARY
 " PATRONAGE; an abuse which obviously
 " tends to exclude the great mass of the people,
 " from any substantial influence in the election
 " of the House of Commons, and which, in its
 " progress, *threatens to usurp the sovereignty of the*
 " *country*, to the equal danger of the King, of
 " the Lords, and of the Commons."

Again :—“ The operation of the first species
 “ of patronage is direct, and subject to positive
 “ proof. EIGHTY-FOUR individuals, do by
 “ their own immediate authority send ONE
 “ HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVEN of your Honour-
 “ able Members to Parliament. And this your
 “ Petitioners are ready, if the fact be disputed,
 “ to prove, and to name the Members and the
 “ Patrons.”

“ The second species of patronage, cannot be
 “ shewn with equal accuracy, though it is felt
 “ with equal force,

“ Your Petitioners are convinced, that, in ad-
 “ dition to the *one hundred and fifty-seven* Honour-
 “ able Members above mentioned, *one hundred*
 “ *and fifty* more, making in the whole THREE
 “ HUNDRED AND SEVEN, are returned to your

“ Honourable House, not by the collected voice
 “ of those whom they appear to represent, but by
 “ the recommendation of seventy powerful indivi-
 “ duals, added to the eighty four above men-
 “ tioned, and making the total number of Patrons
 “ altogether, only ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-
 “ FOUR, who return a decided majority of your
 “ Honourable House.

“ If your Honourable House will accept as
 “ evidence, the common report, and general be-
 “ lief of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs,
 “ which return the Members alluded to, your
 “ Petitioners are ready to name them, and to
 “ prove the fact; or if the Members in question
 “ can be made parties to the inquiry, your Peti-
 “ tioners will name them, and be governed by
 “ the testimony which they themselves shall pub-
 “ licly give.”

If then, the allegations here recited be true,—
 and your Petitioner has been credibly informed,
 they were not so much as questioned by any
 Member of your Honourable House when
 placed on its journals, he hopes he may, without
 giving offence to your Honourable House, (all
 intention of which he sincerely declaims, as on
 this solemn occasion he should think such con-
 duct highly indecent and reprehensible,) he hopes,

he

he says, he may ask, where are to be found ~~the~~ three distinct, independant, and balancing powers of the English Constitution ?

Monarchy, and Aristocracy, indeed, hold their respective places, undiminished in splendour, and apparently possessing their constitutional shares in the government: But when your Petitioner looks for democracy, when he seeks the awfully majestic Representative body of this great nation, emphatically styled THE COMMONS OR GREAT BRITAIN IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED, presumed to emanate from, and to be identified with the great mass of the people,—touched by their every grievance, and sympathizing in all their natural and honourable feelings, does he find such a Representative Body to exist? Do not the journals of your Honourable House, on the contrary, inform him that a decided majority of your Honourable House are returned, “*not by the collected voice of those whom they appear to represent,*” but under the private patronage, or by the immediate authority of *one hundred and fifty-four* individuals?

If these alarming allegations be true, if *one hundred and fifty four* persons can, and actually do, at their own independent will and pleasure, to the grievous wrong of the people, seat

seat in your Honourable House a majority of its members, must not those persons of course, have its determinations at command; and, will not such a state of things amount to the demonstration of a fact, which, keenly as it may be felt by your Petitioner, rather than express, he will leave to be inferred by your Honourable House.

If these afflicting allegations be true, has there not crept into the Government, through an insensible decay, which needs to be repaired, an alarming, a portentous power; a mighty irresistible something, distinct from, and paramount to all the Constitutional Estates of the realm? A power of a character utterly unknown to our Constitution, and abhorrent to the principles of our Government; a power for which political writers have, indeed, an appropriate appellation; but one so odious, that your Petitioner out of respect to your Honourable House, and from his feelings of reverence for the genuine Constitution of his Country, will forbear to express?

And, if such a dreadful power have, in the nature of a disease, grown out of the gradually-increasing decay of popular Representation; and have at its disposal the public purse, and consequently, dependent on its will, the supplies to

the executive magistrate, can even his Majesty be supposed to be beyond the reach of its overbearing sway?—Must not the Peerage be eclipsed by the ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR? And all the just ends of Representation to the People be defeated; while their every interest shall be submitted to the power of men in whose election or appointment they have neither share, controul, or influence?

And if it be likewise true, as farther stated in the aforesaid Petition of the 6th of May, 1793, and of which the then Petitioners tendered “ legal evidence, that FORTY Peers, in defiance “ of your Resolutions, have possessed themselves “ of so many burgage tenures, and obtained such “ an absolute and uncontrouled command in “ very many small boroughs in the kingdom, as “ to be enabled by their own positive authority “ to return EIGHTY-ONE of your Honourable “ Members;” and that the said then Petitioners also had “ the most reasonable grounds to sus- “ peet” (which grounds of suspicion they de- clared themselves ready to shew at the Bar of your Honourable House) “ that no less than “ ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY of your Honour- “ able Members owe their elections entirely to “ the interference of Peers; if these things be true?

true, then your Petitioner humbly conceives, while alarms are so industriously propagated of *attempts and conspirings against the Constitution*, that attempts such as *these*, conspirings so daring and so criminal, strokes so sweeping, to remove the pillars of the fabric, ought not to pass without a full and rigid investigation; and the more so, as the truth or the falsehood of the allegations can so easily be ascertained by your Honourable House.

Lord Chancellor Somers, as every Member of your Honourable House must know, in a Treatise on Government, has truly said, that “*Treason is a betraying of the State; and the greatest and highest treason is that which is committed against the Constitution.*” If, then, the **COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED** be a part, a vital, a sacred part of the Constitution; if it be only on the principle of *Representation*, that your Honourable House can be entitled to that appellation; if sitting in your Honourable House constitutionally implies popular election; and if a loss to the people, either by encroachment or otherwise, of a majority of the seats in your Honourable House, have actually taken place, as so strongly set forth, without denial or question, in the Petition on your Journals

to

to which your present Petitioner now refers; then, he humbly presumes, it will follow, as a necessary conclusion, that the Constitution has indeed received a deep and deadly wound; there may not have been treason in the intention, but no man can deny, that he who more or less destroys the essence of the House of Commons, betrays the State.

Should any men beneath the degree of Baron, even Members of your Honourable House, usurp but for a day seats among the Peers, arrogating to themselves the functions of Lords of Parliament, would not astonishment and indignation strike every breast? And would not the Constitution itself shake to its centre, if possession could be held of those seats, to pass as private property from hand to hand! Or, if any Privy Councillor should dare to step with the King into his Throne on the meeting of Parliament, and hidden fetters should also be discovered under the Royal robe, would not a cry of "*Treason*," burst from every tongue!—Are there, then, your Petitioner humbly asks your Honourable House, only two Estates of the Realm which are to be hedged in, and secured by a sacred inviolability, while the third, like a neglected common, is to have its fences trampled under-foot, and

and to become the spoil of every lawless trespasser! No: Your Honourable House will, doubtless, awaken to the necessity of expelling invaders, and guarding against future incroachment. And it is for your Honourable House seriously to consider, whether reflecting men can believe that either of the two Bills now pending, would ever have seen the light, had not their movers been encouraged to such attacks on the liberties of the People, from the traces of popular Representation in your Honourable House being so nearly worn out and obliterated.

As these Bills have been ushered in, like other inauspicious acts of their authors, with dark insinuations of criminality against men known to profess themselves the advocates for a Reform in your Honourable House, and such insinuated criminality of these men is made the indecent, the monstrous pretext for uprooting the freedom of all men, it may not be unworthy of your Honourable House to bestow a few moments of your attention, on some circumstances respecting those who come within the general description of Friends to Parliamentary Reform; men who, although differing in opinion on subordinate points, are agreed in that one object from which the appellation has been given them.

The

The Reformers are charged with discontent. So far from denying this charge, they have, for the last fifteen years, from time to time, come to your Honourable House to make known this discontent, to shew its cause, and to pray for the removal of both cause and effect. If they are not yet disburthened of their grief, it is because your Honourable House hath not yet thought proper, even to inquire into the justness of their complaint.

The Reformers are accused of conspiring to overthrow the Constitution. False and extravagant as is this accusation, they may not be surprized at it ; and for the following reasons : 1st, Because by *their* exertions to bring to light the conspirings of other men against the Constitution, the truth was daily becoming manifest to the nation : 2dly, Because men interested in upholding the corruptions of the State, which caused the discontent complained of, had in their hands the annual application and expenditure of seventeen millions of public money ; and, as appears to your Petitioner, without being under any sufficient controul : 3dly, Because the said men had also in their hands every other means, which the government and patronage of a great Empire can be supposed to afford, for influencing the public opinion ;

opinion; and, if capable of so atrocious a crime, of spreading through the land false alarms and delusions, which not even truth could resist or oppose without the aid of time:—And lastly; Because the very nature of the case required that, in order to direct the public attention from those corruptions and decays in the very frame of the Government, and those conspirings against the Constitution which the Reformers were so successfully exposing, they themselves should be charged with the crime, and their cause if possible brought into disrepute. Fraud, panic, and delusion have had their day: but your Petitioner trusts in time, as well as in the wisdom of your Honourable House, and the discernment of an English People, for a true judgment being passed between the Reformers and their opponents.

Your Honourable House cannot be ignorant that, with particular reference to the pretended plots of the Reformers, and to the state of these mens minds, certainly not in a state of unfeeling apathy, but suffering under a quick sense of unredressed wrongs—and as a special reason for not administering that political medicine, a Parliamentary Reform, it has by their opponents been urged that *the times are too feverish*; and yet they now behold Bills proposed by their opponents

which, if the people of England are not become, politically speaking, a nation of dead carcases, must spread a flame through the land. If, in an inflammatory state of the natural body, it were to be assigned as a reason for withholding a powerful febrifuge, that *the fever ran too high*, and at the same time the essence of whatever was most inflammatory and irritating were thrown in, to work up the fever into a phrenzy, would not your Honourable House think, that a physician so acting were either a madman or a murderer !

Your Honourable House will recollect at what period it was, that the proceedings of the Reformers first gave Ministers serious disturbance of mind, and as all the subsequent matters must be fresh in its memory, your Petitioner will not do more than just touch on the most prominent objects of attention ; namely, the activity of the Reformers, and the hopes of success with which they were animated ; the censures they hereupon incurred, the imputations thrown out against them, the spies placed around them, the seizure of papers containing all their plans of operation, the imprisonment of conspicuous persons, their indictment for High Treason, and, after a considerable period of most anxious

anxious suspence to the nation, the trials that ensued.—And what at last appeared? Why, it appeared, that mixed with the proceedings of some of these men, in their great and virtuous cause, there were on the part of individuals, marks of indiscretion, rashnes, and folly; for they were men, and some of them without the advantages of education:—It also appeared, that the fervours of some had, even in the judgment of juries, hurried them into expressions deemed seditious. But sedition, your Petitioner begs leave to observe to your Honourable House, is an undefined, and perhaps undefinable crime; an error of that peculiar nature, that in bad times, the base and the servile are perhaps less likely to fall into it, than those who feel a generous indignation at their country's wrongs. A *Sidney* and a *Russel* were accounted seditious, when a *Jeffries* was the pattern of Loyalty. The only person whom your Petitioner recollects to have been convicted of Treason, (except a man whom he believes was afterwards pardoned) was an acknowledged spy, and under circumstances that may account for his conduct in the line of his vocation; a man, if his own account of himself may be credited, tinctured with fanaticism, if not with insanity.

But your Petitioner, with much deference, asks again,—What, after all the agitating alarms, after all the successful diligence of government in securing persons and papers, and after trials, such as never before oppressed the Bench and the Bar with the labours of investigation, what has been brought to light respecting the Reformers, that it imports the nation to know?—Your Petitioner will tell your Honourable House what has been brought to light.—This has been brought to light:—That the Constitution has already been grievously injured and undermined; and that nothing but the measures which the Reformers point out, and have been pursuing,—measures which they have again and again pressed upon the attention of the public and of your Honourable House, can avert its speedy destruction.—And your Petitioner, with great humility, will also beg leave to inform your Honourable House, what has *not* been brought to light concerning the Reformers. In all this sifting of their actions, and even of their very thoughts, there was not discovered the smallest ground for charging them with criminally conspiring to seize on *one hundred and fifty* seats in your Honourable House, and sell them to Peers; or with any attempt at transferring a *decided majority* of those seats to *one hundred and fifty-four* men, to be

held and inherited as private property; giving the possessors of those seats such irresponsible and irresistible power, as to make them, if not in name and in form, yet to all substantial purposes, Sovereigns of their Sovereign; Lords of the only Lords we acknowledge, and, in respect of the people, that which the English Constitution does not know; that which no free government can know; and that which your Petitioner cannot express to your Honourable House, but in language that is a contradiction in terms.—Unchosen Representatives; and with full power over the property, the lives, and liberty of us all.—No: such horrid conspirings to pull down and to subvert from its very foundations the British Government and Constitution, belong not to the Reformers

As amongst other charges that have been imputed to the Reformers, stand those of aiming at an invasion of aristocratic rights, and striking at the constitutional privileges of the Peerage; your Petitioner cannot but observe, that upon the Peers who are said to have seized on so many seats in your Honourable House, such alarms do not appear to have made much impression; or they could not court retaliation, by being the persons to set an example, or continue in the prac-

tice of invading the rights, and destroying the privileges of the Commons.—And how will your Honourable House reconcile the pretended zeal of some men, associated for supporting a Constitution of King, Lords, and Commons, with that utter indifference, if not approbation, with which they look on, while so many Peers stand charged, by Petition to your Honourable House, with openly, in broad day, seizing on its sacred seats; and attempting to draw every power of that Constitution within the dreadful vortex of an unbalanced aristocracy?

Your Petitioner finds it to be an object of one of the Bills now pending, to make it punishable in any man who, by writing or speaking, shall incite another man or men to think ill of "*the established Government and Constitution*," by feeling towards them the sentiments of dislike, or contempt, or hatred, or some such passion. Now, as every passion of the human mind is only excited by its corresponding motive; so certain provisions in a Constitution, or certain actions in rulers, will excite one passion; and others will excite another. By the spirit and letter of this Bill, then, if through any present defects, or future breaches of the Constitution, (and who can say what it may be a year hence, if the people do not

not protect their rights) we should ever experience any gross injustice, or wanton tyranny, this law would doom us to silence; and the greater our misery, the more certain should we be of incurring punishment by the mention of it. Sentiments of contempt must be felt towards a Government and Constitution incapable of shielding us from wrong; and if the oppression should be extreme, hatred and detestation of such Government and Constitution must be a necessary consequence. By the very mention, therefore, of our wrongs, in the situation here supposed, we should excite in our hearers the corresponding passions, and consequently become obnoxious to punishment.

By the second of these Bills, the sacred Constitutional right, of petitioning the Legislature for redress of grievances, is so directly struck at, and if the Bill were to pass into a law, would be so completely annihilated, that it would be a waste of words to trouble your Honourable House with any remarks upon the wording of that Bill.

Your Petitioner, therefore, thinking it would be a disgrace to human nature to live under such laws, humbly trusts your Honourable House will

not suffer them to fully an English Statute Book ; or to alienate the minds of the people from the laws, the Government and Constitution of their country.

Nor should your Petitioner feel justified to his own mind, if he did not remark, that while these Bills affect to shield, they in reality stab the Constitution ; and under the flimsy pretence of supporting its honour, they go directly, and by the shortest road, and therefore in his conscience he believes them solely intended by their movers, to establish and perpetuate its corruptions and abuses, by cutting off all communication between man and man, and making it one of the greatest of our crimes to utter the greatest of our wrongs, while these corruptions and abuses are to be sanctioned and secured, under the magic phrase of “ the ESTABLISHED Government and Constitution.”

Your Petitioner, therefore, feels it a solemn duty he owes his country—he hopes in God it may not be the last he may be enabled to perform—to urge with all the importunity consistent with respect, the present imperious necessity of a Reform in the Representation of the people in your Honourable House ; as the best and only permanent

permanent security which they can have for their liberties against all attempts ; as that alone which can remove discontents and fix the Constitution in their hearts ; and as the only natural way, and therefore the best, to reconcile them to the burthens of Taxation, and the wholesome restraints of equitable law and just government.

And your Petitioner shall ever pray, &c. &c.

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

Brothertoft Farm,
Nov. 21, 1795.

I re-

I resume my discourse Sir, with observing, that the tale which has now been unfolded, respecting the ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR, is a tale of horror, that may well make the hair of every listening Englishman to stand an end. When the facts and arguments there insisted on shall have been combined with the striking measures of our rulers for some time past; with the writings circulated under their auspices, and with *a certain declaration* of the Attorney General, which I have taken care to preserve from oblivion; I may safely leave the decision to those who have hitherto been the most partial to our Ministers and their system; for in my conscience I declare, I cannot see how it is possible to resist the evidence of danger, the most imminent to our liberties, from that quarter to which I have laboured to draw your attention:—And Sir, in the sincerity of my soul, I declare it to be the settled, but melancholy conviction of my mind, that if the Bills now pending should pass, those liberties will be no more:—until regenerated England shall once again, as she has heretofore done, recover her freedom and her laws, at the expence of her best blood.

I have spoken, Sir, of writings countenanced by our Rulers: to save the time of the meeting I will

I will content myself with quoting one only: But where the patronage the author has received from our Rulers is considered, the wishes and intentions of those Rulers will be as clearly seen, as if an hundred of their penmen were to be brought in review before you.

The Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, in a very valuable work published in 1792, has many occasional remarks on Government in general, as well as on that of England in particular: He therein pathetically bemoans the defects of our Constitution; and he paints the evils and calamities which flow in torrents from those defects in glowing colours. He declares English taxation to be carried to a height that is "*cruel, shameful and tyrannical;**" and this was written before the present war, which may probably require an additional taxation of five millions per annum to be added to our former burthens.

He points out the necessity of resisting "*that variety of combination, which on principles of plunder and despotism is every where at work to enslave*" the people of Europe in general, including those of England.*

* Young's Travels, 1st Edition, page 523, 540, 548, 551, 555.

He imputes it to “*an aristocracy uniting with the Crown against the people, that we have been INFAMOUSLY INVOLVED IN PERPETUAL WARS, from which none reap any benefit, but that tribe of vermin which thrive most, when a nation most declines; contractors, victuallers, pay-masters, stock-jobbers, and money-scriveners; a set by whom Ministers are surrounded; and in favour of whom, whole classes amongst the people are beggared and ruined.*”*

He represents our “*national burthens, taxes, rates, tithes, and monopolies, at thirty millions*” per annum; while I believe he knows, that our whole landed revenue scarcely exceeds *twenty millions*; and this statement of our expenditure, I must again remind you, was before the commencement of the war; which therefore may be expected to leave us under an expenditure and loss by monopolies of *thirty-five millions* per annum.

And, Sir, to sum up all in one word, this gentleman in the book I quote, tells us in express terms, that the English Constitution is “**WORTH-**

* Young’s Travels, 1st Edition, page 523, 590, 548, 551, 555.

+ This writer has well exposed the injustice of the *wool* monopoly, whereby the growers of wool lose several millions per annum.

“ LESS; since in a single century, it has involved the
 “ nation in a DEBT OF SO VAST A MAGNITUDE,
 “ THAT EVERY BLESSING WHICH MIGHT OTHER-
 “ WISE HAVE BEEN PERPETUATED IS PUT TO THE
 “ STAKE; so that if the nation do not make some
 “ change in its Constitution, it is much to be
 “ dreaded, that the Constitution will ruin the
 “ nation.”*

After declaring and publishing all this, we behold the very same writer, in the course of a few months, bring forth his *Example of France a Warning to Britain*, in which we find him, not the mere apologist, but the direct panegyrist of “ an unequal representation, rotten boroughs, long parliaments, extravagant Courts, selfish Ministers, and corrupt majorities,” as “ intimately interwoven with our practical freedom;”† and now we accordingly find him the boldest of all advocates for the present holy war; the boldest of all champions in the cause of Ministers; and the bitterest of all enemies to reform and reformers ‡.

But

* Young’s Travels, 1st Edition, page 523, 540, 548, 551, 555.

† Example of France a Warning to Britain, page 171.

‡ This gentleman has just published another work, intituled, *The Constitution safe without Reform*; wherein I am restored on for

But, Sir, the point to which I shall more particularly call your attention, is his attack upon that branch of our government, in the purity and independance of which, on any influence but their own, the people can alone find security for their liberties.

He tells us, Sir, "that it is mere theory to suppose that the House of Commons purports to be the Representatives of the People, if by representation is meant choice*;" that "the prosperity and happiness we have enjoyed for a century, and never so great as at present, is owing precisely to the House of Commons NOT speaking the will of the People†;" and

for want of candour, &c.—If in my Essay, intitled, *The Commonwealth in Danger*, I have shewn a want of candour, or have misrepresented Mr. Young's meaning, I readily take blame to myself for any such oversight, and disavow all intention of so doing. That my indignation was moved by that gentleman's writings, I acknowledge; and a person writing under the influence of such a sentiment, is but too likely to trespass on strict candour. Mr. Young seems to triumph in not having been refuted on those points wherein I attempted to refute him. I thought I had refuted him; and whatever may have been my inability in that respect, or my misapprehensions of his meanings; or giving too harsh an interpretation of them, my only wish is that every Englishman would calmly read both performances, and then decide.

* Example of France a Warning to Britain, p. 89.

† Ibid. p. 94.

farther, that "the House of Commons was not
" created by the People, but by the Crown;
" never did represent the People in any period of
" our history; and is not responsible to the Peo-
" ple*." Good God! And when we see such
doctrines maintained by the Secretary of a pub-
lic Board, can the drift of our rulers be mis-
taken!

Combine, Sir, this language, 1st, with that de-
cay of popular election which in effect has sold
the whole People of England into the hands of
the one hundred and fifty-four, as completely as the
People of Egypt were once sold into the hands
of Pharaoh; 2dly, with the calumnies and seve-
rities heaped upon the advocates for a Reform in
the Representation; 3dly, with the words of the
Attorney General, (words pronounced in my
hearing, and to which I pray you to attend) when
he says, " *If the King should consent to act with any*
" *Representation otherwise than as it is now consti-*
" *tuted, he ought to die; and I trust in God he would*
" *die;* " and 4thly and lastly, combine this lan-
guage, and a great deal more to be found in the
same book, with the Bills of Lord Grenville and
Mr. Pitt, for fettering our very thoughts, for
smothering within our labouring bosoms the

* Example of France a Warning to Britain, p. 200.

fense of our wrongs, and for rendering it criminal to complain ; and surely, Sir, no partiality for any human being can be so blind, no prejudice can be so strong, nor any delusion so fascinating, as to persuade Englishmen that these men are not attempting to establish arbitrary power on the ruin of our liberties !

To the friends of the Minister I can say, that I also was once his friend ; and that he then was the object of my greatest reverence, of my highest hope. Nor did he ever give me the smallest cause of personal offence. I am now his enemy ; for he is become, in my estimation, the enemy of his country and of human kind.

The present, Sir, believe me, is not one of those party calls upon the public, by which we have been so often amused, so often duped. It is no paltry struggle between the ins and the outs ; but, Sir, it is a grand effort of the *one hundred and fifty-four*, the terrorists of England—before the delusions with which they filled the land are worn out, to render themselves the real and dreaded sovereigns of the country ; and they hope to cheat an abused people with the vain shadows of a King, and of two Houses of Parliament, which no doubt they will be pleased to retain ;

retain; while centering in themselves all power, they shall rule this unhappy land with a rod of iron.—These Bills, Sir, are meant as their last stroke.—I trust in God, Sir, and in the virtue and the courage of my countrymen, they will be the last stroke they will ever dare to aim at our liberties! I trust that these Bills, to their confusion, will yet be consigned to the flames!

Persuading myself, Sir, that we are in no wise prepared to submit to such masters; and that we can yet preserve to ourselves the right of proposing to take the Representation of the People of England out of the hands of the *one hundred and fifty-four*; as well as to our true Sovereign, the right of giving royal assent to an *Act* for *a different Representation from that which is now constituted*, without either ourselves for so proposing, or him for so assenting, *being executed as traitors*; notwithstanding the plainly implied threat of *the Marquis of Bath's Representative in the House of Commons*, the present Attorney General. I say, Sir, persuading myself that we shall never consent to receive chains from any, especially from the scum of the Rotten Boroughs, I have the honour to suggest that, in the Address of Congratulation to his Majesty, he be earnestly intreated, for the safety of his Crown, the interests of his

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Family, and the liberties of his affectionate People, to refuse his assent to the two horrible Bills now pending in Parliament.

With great respect, I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

F I N I S.

Published by the same Author,

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THE
COMMONWEALTH IN DANGER;

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION,

CONTAINING

Remarks on some late Writings of

ARTHUR YOUNG, Esq.

Printed for J. JOHNSON, in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

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СВЯТОГО АЛЕКСАНДРА

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(4)

APPENDIX

TO A

LETTER

TO THE

HIGH SHERIFF OF LINCOLN,

BY JOHN CARTWRIGHT, Esq.

December 5, 1795.

HAVING received inquiries, particularly from a Lincolnshire gentleman of family and fortune, concerning the proceedings at the late County Meeting, held at Lincoln, which I cannot answer; and such inquiries also concerning what it was that I offered to the consideration of that meeting, as to make it fit that no part of it should be with-held; I shall now subjoin that part of my Address to the Meeting, which, on account of its locality, and its relation in some degree to myself, I had not at first thought it necessary to publish.

b

The

The reader will please then to turn back to my Public Address to the County Meeting, and supply the chasm which follows the words —“ the late atrocious outrage on his Majesty's person,” as follows, viz.

“ But before I say more, allow me, Sir, a few words relating to myself.

“ Could I have attended personally at the Meeting, I am but too well aware, Sir, of the load of prejudice under which I must have risen to have delivered my sentiments. It is well known, Sir, that both at the time when an alarm of plots and conspiracies against the State came abroad, and again when so many persons were apprehended on a charge of High Treason, all sorts of unfavourable reports concerning me were circulated throughout the County—that I had absconded, that I was committed to the Tower, to Newgate, &c. &c. Nor can I suppose the prejudices then formed to my disadvantage are even at this time done away; when I recollect on one of the State Trials of last winter, I was held up by the Attorney-General, as deeply implicated in the proceedings of

“ of the Society for Constitutional Information,
“ in the spring of the year, 1792.

“ After these things, Sir, have been said and
“ circulated, I trust that I may expect from your
“ indulgence, and that of a Meeting of a County
“ where my property and residence are seated, a
“ patient hearing for a few minutes. And I
“ shall hope in a particular manner to conciliate
“ the favour of Gentlemen who may be members
“ of Loyal Associations against the enemies of
“ our Constitution, when I now present myself
“ to them in the character of an *Informer* :—yes,
“ Sir, an *Informer*.

“ If any Gentleman may have given me full
“ credit for knowing somewhat of the designs
“ against the State, which have given good men
“ so much concern and alarm, they will now
“ find me doing justice to their sagacity; and,
“ in whatever degree it may affect my reputa-
“ tion, I will now conscientiously reveal all
“ that I know of these matters, which it can at
“ present be necessary to explain. The narra-
“ tive, Sir, I trust, will induce the Meeting
“ unanimously to adopt an amendment to the
“ mere congratulation of his Majesty, which at
“ the close of this Address to you, I shall have
“ the honour to suggest.

" The informations, Sir, which I have to
 " communicate, are not, I assure you, of evil
 " designs, as yet only labouring in the minds of
 " mischievous men, unmatured and unhatched ;
 " but of acts of the highest criminality against
 " the State already committed ; and conspirings
 " for the utter subversion of the Government
 " and Constitution, which have already taken
 " effect, and are proveable beyond a possibility
 " of question or doubt.—As I have already, Sir,
 " communicated to one branch of the Legisla-
 " ture, by a Petition bearing date the 21st of
 " this month, the most important parts of the
 " information I have to give, I beg leave to
 " present you with a copy of that Petition. It
 " is a paper, Sir, that will be found strictly re-
 " levant to the business of the day, provided
 " any amendment referring to the two Bills
 " above-mentioned can be admitted, and worked
 " into the proposed Address ; for almost its
 " whole contents is," &c.

The chasm in the foregoing sheets, p. 2. being
 now supplied, the reader is in possession of the
 whole that I offered to the attention of the
 County Meeting. Whether it contain matter of
 importance to the English nation, and matter
 peculiarly fit to be taken into consideration,
 while a House of Commons was in the act of
 passing

passing laws, which so great a part of the community have contemplated with horror; which even their advocates acknowledge to be violations of our liberties*; and which to the writer appear to have been purposely formed, *to support and to perpetuate that enormous inroad upon the Constitution*, which he has pointed out; it is for every Englishman, laying his hand on his heart, and by the lights in his own mind, to decide for himself. It is also for him to decide, whether the *imputed designs* of the very worst individuals in the Reforming Societies, or the *real and undeniable acts* of men in high stations, who are amongst the accusers of those persons, are the most likely to destroy our Constitution and Liberties. And it is moreover for him to decide, whether the laws which those great ones are now carrying by their Parliamentary majorities, against the feelings of the public, or that Reform, which is the grand object of those Societies, and of the foregoing Address, most deserve his approbation and support! and in order that the whole of my proceedings may be fully and clearly seen, I take the liberty also of subjoining my private Letter, which accompanied my public Address. It is as follows:

* See the Debate of the Commons, in the Morning Chronicle of Friday the 4th of December, 1795.

Brothertoft Farm, Nov. 25, 1795.

DEAR SIR,

“ THE public letter to you, as High Sheriff of the County, and the other paper herewith transmitted, will explain themselves, and you will see in that letter my request to have both read at the meeting you have convened.

“ Disabled as I am, by illness, from attending the meeting, I should not think of troubling it with my sentiments in writing, did not the occasion, in my judgment, call for every exertion within the power of man; and render it not only my duty to do as I have done, but make it also peculiarly desirable and important that the opinions of all who have reflected on the situation of public affairs should, if possible, be collected by such means as present themselves.

“ During the latter part of the American War, I well remember many instances of such communications having been well received by the County Meetings; and no doubt they contributed

“ buted towards fixing the public opinion at
“ that time.

“ In truth, Sir, I feel this to be a most awful
“ crisis to our country ; and as such I wish to
“ perform towards it my best services as a
“ citizen.—It will doubtless remain with the
“ meeting, to decide whether or not what I now
“ offer shall have a hearing. For reasons, in-
“ deed, which you will see assigned in my public
“ letter, it seems not improbable that some per-
“ son may oppose the reading of any thing com-
“ ing from me. It is on that account that I
“ thus early send you my thoughts, instead of
“ having them delivered to you when the meet-
“ ing shall be assembled.

“ Having had time for perusing and con-
“ sidering them, you will be able to state to the
“ meeting how far, in your opinion, they may
“ merit its attention ; and doubtless the senti-
“ ments of the High Sheriff on this point will
“ have much weight. Not in the smallest de-
“ gree knowing your political sentiments, I
“ cannot at all anticipate the judgment you are
“ likely to form : but I am sure it will be that
“ of an enlightened and independent man.

" But when I appeal to you, Sir, as a gentle-
 " man, and a man of feeling, to decide whe-
 " ther or not a man who has been, on account
 " of his supposed political sentiments, traduced
 " as I have been, and have noticed in my public
 " letter, has not a claim on a political meeting of
 " the County, where his property and residence
 " are fixed, to be indulged with a patient hear-
 " ing of a few minutes, I well know what your
 " decision will be.—The whole I believe now
 " sent you may be read in a quarter of an hour,
 " or twenty minutes. To those who may re-
 " mark that it is too long, I would reply, that
 " if his Majesty and the State be in real danger;
 " we shall not much abound in loyalty, if we
 " cannot give up, not only minutes, but months
 " and years of our time, towards working out
 " their preservation.

" To say the real truth, I should not have in-
 " troduced a word concerning the unworthy
 " treatment of myself, had it not been with the
 " hope that it might influence men actuated by
 " honourable feelings, the more readily to ac-
 " quiesce in the receiving and hearing my plead-
 " ings in behalf of a sinking country.

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“ To my calumniators I shall only say,—
“ ‘ Strike, but hear me.’

“ With much respect, I remain,

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Your obedient,

“ JOHN CARTWRIGHT.”

P. S. “ Provided, Sir, you can insure the reading of the paper I enclose in its proper place, as a part of my Address to the meeting, without going into what privately respects myself, I could wish that last mentioned part to be omitted. Under this supposition I have with red ink inclosed between hooks, what is to be passed over in reading, inserting a provisional word or two, in red ink also, for properly connecting the other, now distinct parts. You will therefore have the goodness, Sir, to attend to the two different ways in which, according to circumstances, it may be read: and I shall esteem it a favour if you will inform me of the result; that is, whether or not my Address was allowed to be read at all; and, if allowed, whether the part included between hooks was read or omitted.

“ Just

" Just recollecting my quotations, and thinking you ought to be informed where the original passages are to be found, I am to request your acceptance of an Essay to which I have on this occasion referred, and which will direct you to those original passages.

" On the back of the Book you will find the pages to be consulted. I also beg leave to send you a Copy of the Petition of the 6th of May, 1793."

The Gentlemen who attended the Meeting will now be able to judge, whether there would have been any impropriety in hearing what I had to say ; and they will also see, whether in fact the nature and character of my Address were explained to them with sufficient accuracy to be correctly understood. I have some reason to think they were not ; so that it is possible the Vote of the Meeting against reading my Address might have been owing to an erroneous judgment, occasioned by some inaccuracy of description on the part of the Chairman. Here, then, and in perfect charity with all parties, I leave the matter : content with acting according to the best lights of my own judgment, and sincerely wishing every man in the kingdom to do the same.

It was not what passed at the Meeting at Lincoln, which determined me to publish my Address as it appears in the foregoing sheets ; but the same sense of duty to the Public which has many times animated me to offer it my sentiments on one great political Question, *in which every other is involved* ;—A QUESTION TO WHICH EVERY DAY'S EXPERIENCE SHEWS THAT THE NATION HAS NOT YET PAID SUFFICIENT ATTENTION ; ALTHOUGH THE PRESERVATION OF ITS LAWS AND LIBERTIES ABSOLUTELY DEPENDS THEREON.

One word on the supposition, started by the wicked and listened to by the credulous, that the modern Friends of Reform and of Liberty are at the same time Friends of Anarchy, and the promoters of a system tending to the destruction of PROPERTY.

Until the days of fraudulent alarm, we had always been accustomed to take for granted, that between *Liberty and Property* there was an inseparable union.

No union, indeed, is more certain, Where there is no Liberty, there can be no Property. “ What property have I in that, which, at the will of another, may be taken from me without

“out my consent.” So said *Locke*, and so say the Reformers of this day.

That which, in a religious sense, and in the full import of the expression is called *Repentance*, is in politics called *Reformation*. To men who have departed from the moral constitution of nature; it is rightly said, “Unless ye repent, ye cannot be saved:” so to the members of a State which hath departed from its political Constitution, it is as truly affirmed, that, unless ye *reform* ye cannot be saved.

This is a simple truth, which no power can suppress, which no sophistry can elude. It is on this truth that upright reformers act. It is sufficiently obvious, how much it is the interest of the political Pharisee, the Ministerial Jesuit, and the corrupt violater of Constitutional Representation, to cry down Reform, to hunt down Reformers, and to divert public attention from the simple, sacred and saving *truth* which I have mentioned. Hence the torrents of defamation and calumnies they so incessantly circulate: hence the exertion of their gigantic *Influence* throughout the land; and hence the places, the pensions and the patronage so lavishly bestowed upon the base enemies of truth and freedom; and the baser Apostates from better principles!

I speak

I speak not thus to favour one faction at the expence of another. In my eyes, all are factious who oppose healing the wounds of the Constitution by a Reform in the Representation of the People. If contending parties amongst the powerful are alike enemies to this measure, it is in my estimation a matter of perfect indifference to the people, by whom they are to be ruled and ruined.

When I hear it urged by an enemy of Freedom that every Reformer is a Jacobin aiming at Anarchy, I am not surprised ; because Reform must be the bane of his projects ; but when the upright and independent man suffers his patriotism to be palsied by such trash, I am afflicted for my country and for mankind : To such a man I would make this appeal—

‘ What is anarchy to do for me ?—Have I
 ‘ powers of mind or of body, to rule in a storm ?
 ‘ —Could my feeble voice be heard in a hurri-
 ‘ cane ?—Have I steeled my bosom that I could
 ‘ behold the violences, the bloodshed, the infamies
 ‘ of dissolved society, and of a political chaos in
 ‘ its maddest ferment ?—Have I a mind suffi-
 ‘ ciently base and a temper sufficiently pliant, to
 ‘ accommodate my opinions to ‘ the factious de-
 ‘ magogue of the day ; and to turn about as
 ‘ one

‘one mob-king should succeed another?—And
 ‘lastly, have I not, limited and moderate as
 ‘my property is, far too much of it, to pro-
 ‘mote at my age, and under all my infirmities,
 ‘any measures tending to the *destruction* of pro-
 ‘perty; and to a division of all I have amongst
 ‘the profligate sons of confusion and rapine!

It is because I think property ought to be de-
 fended against every species of violation, whether
 of the robber who takes it by guineas, or of cor-
 rupt factions who take it by millions, that I am the
 Friend of Liberty: It is because I would up-
 hold Order, Morals and a free Constitution, that
 I am, and by the grace of God ever will remain,
 the Friend of Reform.

THE END.

